

Warnings To the Churches - Idolatry

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

"Flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14)

Our text for today may seem at first to be hardly needed in our country. In an age of education and intelligence, we might almost fancy it is waste of time to tell us to "flee from idolatry."

I am bold to say that this is a great mistake. I believe that we have come to a time when the subject of idolatry demands a thorough and searching investigation. I believe that idolatry is near us, all around us, and in the midst of us, to a very fearful extent. The second commandment, in one word, is in danger. "The plague is begun."

Without further preface, I propose to consider the following four points:

- I. The definition of idolatry. WHAT IS IT?
- II. The cause of idolatry. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?
- III. The form idolatry assumes in the visible Church of Christ. WHERE IS IT?
- IV. The ultimate termination of idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I feel that the subject is encompassed with many difficulties. Our lot is cast in an age when truth is constantly in danger of being sacrificed to "toleration," "love," and "peace," falsely so-called. Nevertheless, I cannot forget, as a minister, that the Church has given little or no warnings on the subject of idolatry; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, truth about idolatry is, in the highest sense, truth for the times.

I. Let me, then, first of all supply a definition of idolatry. Let me show WHAT IT IS.

It is of the utmost importance that we should understand this. Unless I make this clear, I can do nothing with the subject. Vagueness and indistinctness prevail upon this point, as upon almost every other in religion. The Christian who desires not be continually running aground in his spiritual voyage, must have his channel well buoyed, and his mind well stored with clear definitions.

I say then, that Idolatry is a worship, in which the honor due to the Triune God, and to God only, is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures.

It may vary. It may assume different forms, according to the ignorance or the knowledge—the civilization or the barbarism, of those who offer it. It may be grossly absurd and ludicrous, or it may closely border on truth, and being most superficially defended. But whether in the adoration of the idol of Juggernaut, or in the adoration of the Pope in St. Peter\

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